

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God Within Us

By
Richard Walsh, C.S.P.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

<https://archive.org/details/holyspiritgodwit00wals>

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God Within Us

By

RICHARD WALSH, C.S.P.



THE PAULIST PRESS
401 WEST 59TH STREET
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

Nihil Obstat:

JOHN M. A. FEARNs, S.T.D.,

Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN,

Archbishop of New York.

New York, December 1, 1950.

The nihil obstat and imprimatur are official declarations that a book or pamphlet is free of doctrinal or moral error. No implication is contained therein that those who have granted the nihil obstat and imprimatur agree with the contents, opinions or statements expressed.

COPYRIGHT, 1950, BY
THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God Within Us

By RICHARD WALSH, C.S.P.

THE greatest tragedy of life is to be alone. In every large city there are "skid-rows" peopled by nameless, almost faceless individuals. And the stamp that points them out is the mark of loneliness. They are like the fallen leaves in November, crowded together in a heap of anonymity. Each derelict wanders the streets through dark night and dim day, half-alive and aware that his life means nothing to any other person on this planet. It is life's greatest tragedy that so many are so alone. No soup-kitchen, no quarter flippantly tossed off, no impersonal greeting from a welfare worker can stifle the loneliness. And these homeless vagrants walk and walk their lonely journey through a living death.

Many others who have full-course dinners at their tables are likewise alone. All over America there are countless divorcees and other stray social derelicts who know not friendship, and have never known love. Even among families it oftentimes happens that a father or mother is not respected—not invited to share the family intimacy. They sense that they don't belong, any-

more. They are excess baggage. And the tears of loneliness likewise make their soft pillows damp with grief.

So Many — So Unhappy

Why is it that in a nation dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure, so many thousands are unhappy? Why if peace of mind is one of the four great American demigods that almost everyone worships, at least in secret, are its charms denied to most? Why in spite of the thousands of volumes attempting to give one the clue to a balanced personality, are there so many hundreds of thousands of neurotics who find that pain is the order of the day? And why do our bulging mental hospitals cry out to us that man is a lonesome animal walking the wasteland in search of peace?

But Someone else is lonely, too. And this Man speaks of His loneliness in words thousands of years old. "I looked for one who would grieve with me, and there was none; and for one that would comfort me and I found none." Yes, it is the Son of God, the true Son of Mary Who uttered these words. And it is His plaint that we hearken to in the aloneness of our modern world. After coming to earth and living among us, to be regarded as just another historical character is small gratitude indeed. The coldness of the chill

straw at Bethlehem and the furtive trip to Egypt, the thousand and one occasions when there was no pillow or roof for His head, the searing agony of Calvary . . . and now half the people in America consider Christ only the equal of Confucius, or Socrates. A few well-intentioned precepts was His contribution, and yet how meager they seem to the semi-enlightened who seek the wisdom of the ages in the newest book with the glossy cover. For these people, it would seem that Christ never came, and His influence has been nil.

“Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you.” These words were addressed to all, especially those alone, by the Master. The loneliness that fills the heart of Christ is caused not only by the silence of the sophisticated pagan in the drawing room of America but also by the tremendous neglect in the lives of Christians who are dedicated to follow their Master but who each day stray further away from Him.

Christ's Cure for Loneliness

The heart of Christ sadly remembers the night in the upper room. The apostles then were filled with a sadness that they could not explain. All they knew was that the Master was leaving them. He had spoken of His death, His crucifixion, and whether this were

to be fact or fiction, there was to be some separation. "A little while, and you shall not see me—and again a little while and you shall see me—because I go to the Father." And as an answer to the repeated queries, "Whither goest thou? We don't know where you are going," He promised that He would never leave them. The promise that He made at Capharnaum that He would always remain with them under the appearances of bread and wine now for the first time became a reality beneath their amazed eyes. It was at that time that He gave them the tremendous secret of the Indwelling Presence of the Blessed Trinity. "If any man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come and take up our abode with him." *WE* will take up our abode with him. Father and Son dwelling in some way, some strangely beautiful manner in the soul of the good man who has been consecrated to the service of God by his baptism.

The apostles never forgot for one instance this beautiful message of Christ. Years later St. Peter, writing to the Christians all over the world in his second papal encyclical, said that we were "partakers of the divine nature." St. John could tell his disciples: "behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called, and should be the Sons of God . . . behold now we are the Sons of God." These

words of course were echoing the statement in the prologue of his gospel. . . . "As many as received him, he gave them power to become the Sons of God, to them who believe in his name—who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God." The destiny of the Christian then is to be filled with God—to have God transform a human soul into a resemblance of Himself—to be a true Son of the almighty, everlasting God. Nothing else mattered now—neither money nor worldly acclaim but only whether man qualified for membership in the home of heaven by being a member of God's family.

Temples of the Holy Spirit

The great apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, told the early Christians at Corinth and Rome that they were to be a holy people because God dwelled in them. His remarks on the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit explains further the words of Christ at the Last Supper, "Know you not that you are temples of the Holy Ghost and that the spirit of God dwells in you?" he asks the Corinthians. "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy," He warns them. Christians are to be holy, they must fly all uncleanness of desire and act because the holy God dwells in them. St. John Chrysostom would write three centuries later that

“Corinth was the most licentious city in all history,” but St. Paul told these Christians who lived in such filth that if they were conscious of the Holy Ghost in their souls He would protect them from all evil.

The Fathers of the Church did not let this beautiful doctrine drop out of the picture of their lives. They kept the teaching of the New Testament alive by their penetrating analysis and prayer, and eventually saw even richer things implied in it. The Apostolic Fathers are in complete agreement that they share the life of the Holy Spirit. St. Athanasius writes: “If we by receiving the Holy Ghost are allowed to participate in the Divine Nature, no one but a fool will assert that the Holy Ghost is not of divine but of human nature.” He also makes a comparison between the way the members of the Holy Trinity dwell in Each Other and the way They dwell in Themselves. St. Cyril of Alexandria describes the soul inhabited by the Holy Ghost as inlaid with gold, transfused by fire, filled with the sweet odor of balsam and so forth. St. Augustine, the great Doctor of the Western Church explained the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost in this way: “The Holy Ghost came to the souls of the faithful no longer by simple activity or grace of visitation but by presence

of his divine majesty. His very substance was poured into our hearts."

One of the most beautiful expressions of this doctrine occurred in the trial of St. Lucy who was martyred in 303 A. D. When the blandishments of her suitors could not persuade her to turn away from Christ, and she was threatened with the lash, St. Lucy told them that the words of Christ had prophesied that when they stood before the kings and judges the Holy Ghost would speak through them. Her chief tormentor and former suitor, Paschasius asked St. Lucy, "Is the Holy Spirit in you?" He was told by the saint that those who lived a holy and chaste life were temples of the Holy Spirit and that nothing save a deliberate sin could drive the Holy Ghost from the soul. The testimony of St. Lucy though more dramatic than the ordinary writings of the Doctors of the Church was nevertheless typical of the common belief of all Christians that their souls were holy because of the God Who dwelled therein.

How Is God Within Us?

The great question, however, once we have seen that Christ's words to His apostles at the Last Supper were to be taken literally when He told them that He and His Father would come to them who loved Him

and would make their abode with him is this—how does God dwell in the soul of man? Does God live in man any differently than He dwells in the fire or the tree? God is everywhere. How then can He dwell in our souls in a special way if He is already there?

According to the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, God dwells in all creatures in three ways. First of all by His power since all creatures are subject to His authority and everything that exists has been kept in existence by the Divine Will. God dwells in everything by His presence because He knows and sees everything that is or can be. Finally, referring to St. Paul's statement to the Athenians, "in whom we live and move and are," the Patron of Christian Schools tells us that He dwells in everything and gives His creatures not only life and movement but their very being. This power extends to all things since God causes everything and thereby affects everything. St. Augustine, in his younger days, compared this presence of God to a shoreless sea, but none ever described this presence of God more beautifully than King David who wrote in the 138th Psalm of the omnipresence of God:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or
where shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend

into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me.

Yet God must be present in the soul of man in a much different way than Beethoven is present in the Ninth Symphony, than the genius of Michelangelo is reflected by the great dome of St. Peter's. Christ spoke of this Divine Presence as an intimate union and St. Paul told us that this was like a dwelling in a temple. This divine inhabitation within us in the state of grace is not merely the presence of the Creator and preserver of the universe Who is keeping us in existence, but a new and different relationship that comes to us through faith and charity. For this is a very real presence whereby the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all take up residence in the soul of someone who is in the state of grace. The Father comes to us and with Him we receive the Son and from Their mutual love proceeds the Holy Ghost. What has gone on for all eternity in the intimate life of God in that amazing loving union of the Three Divine Persons now incredibly takes place in our own souls. God comes to us to sanctify us

and through His presence within us, transforms us into holy men and women. Thus it was that St. Paul would come back again and again to the idea that we should be holy because the Holy God is dwelling within us.

A New Presence

The Bible in speaking of God in the soul uses the word "dwelling." It is no longer mere presence but dwelling as in a home. St. Paul compares the body of a Christian to a temple. From these expressions we discover the clue to the mystery of God within us. Any temple is a sacred shrine in which God is worshiped. Long before Christianity God was worshiped in the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem and the chosen people knew that this was a unique and holy place—that God dwelt here not as He was present in the field or in an ordinary house. For in a temple God blesses His people who worship Him and it is precisely in this way that God intends His presence to be understood. He is dwelling in the soul of someone who is His friend. Unless a person is a friend of God, God does not dwell in his soul and when a friend of God commits an act of hatred—mortal sin, he deliberately drives God from his soul.

This presence of God in the soul is then a very real presence, just as real as the presence of our Lord in

the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. We are not, of course, united to the Holy Spirit in the same way that the divine and human natures were joined in the person of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem or in the tabernacle but nevertheless we really and truly receive God in our souls and are made partakers of His divine life.

How Do We Know God?

God lives in our souls in a twofold manner. God dwells in us as an object of knowledge and as an object of love. There are several means by which we can know God. The ordinary way of knowing Him in this life is by reason. St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans tells us that the invisible things of Him Who created them are clearly seen from the things that are made and the Vatican Council in 1870 made it an article of faith that all men have the ability to come to a knowledge of God through the evidence of creation. Through this process of reasoning we can even argue to some of God's own characteristics. We can discern God as an all-powerful, all-knowing, eternal Being and these divine attributes were discovered four hundred years before Christ by the great Greek philosopher, Aristotle. The second way by which we know God is through faith. By faith we believe what God

tells us about Himself. He tells us, for instance, that there are three persons in His one nature and even though this truth is incomprehensible to our finite minds, we know it to be true because God has revealed this to us. Faith gives us therefore a much more intimate and direct knowledge of God but even this does not make us know God directly or see Him as He is. St. John, the beloved disciple tells us however, of a new type of knowledge that is perfected not in this life, but in eternity. He writes that then we shall see Him as He is. St. Paul echoes this teaching when he tells us that in the next world we shall know God even as we are known here below. The third type of knowledge therefore that comes to man is of course the Beatific vision whereby man knows God directly and sees Him face to face.

Obviously man does not have this Beatific vision in this life. St. Paul and perhaps a few other saints had something close to it for he tells us that he was carried up to the Third Heaven. But ordinarily speaking no man in this life knows God directly. We know God only through reason and faith and yet when the Holy Spirit dwells in the soul of someone in the state of grace He is present as an object of knowledge. When the veil of this life is lifted we will know directly with our same intelligence that same God Who even

now dwells in our souls. And though we now are still far from experiencing the direct vision of God, nevertheless we can begin this eternal life on earth by means of the presence of God within us. This real presence of God in our soul can get for us a quasi-experimental knowledge of God so that in some vague way I not only believe, but I know. Like St. Peter we can say to God, "To whom shall we go. Thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and know that Thou art Christ, the Son of God."

God Is Love

God is present in our soul however, not only that He might be known but as He might be loved. God is the God of love. St. John writing to his disciples told them "little children love one another for God has first loved you" and then again he settles the eternal question about the meaning of love when he tells them that "God is love." Certainly no word in our language is misused so frequently as the word "love." Love has been given such a vague definition by people who have never known it that it has become a synonym for almost anything. The catchy words of hundreds of popular songs use the expression over and over again that its true meaning has long since disappeared. People

Speak of love so flippantly, so casually as though it were something that would come and go like a spring breeze that is quickly forgotten in the heat of the summer. They claim to give their love to many things and since they do not know the true meaning of love, they cannot do so.

Actually the greatest thing in life is love. Our Lord told the young man seeking the answer to life's riddle, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself." The Son of God added significantly that on these depended the whole law and the prophets. St. Robert Bellarmine speaking of the examination that was to come to everyone at the end of the world wrote, "At that judgment we will not be asked about the things that concern us today; charity will be the whole syllabus." The greatest people who have ever lived have had one common trait. They have all been great lovers. They have been the people whose souls have been filled by a truly amazing, truly supernatural love of God and these people of course are the saints.

God's Love Overflows

Moreover everything in life that is beautiful is an effect of love. The deep red of a summer sunset, the beautiful song of a nightingale on a clear night, the

harmony of the stellar constellations, all show forth the love of God. For it was by means of this love that all things sprang into being. The Mass of Pentecost begins, "The spirit of God moved over the waters and . . . all things were created." This creation, this beautiful radiance of divine power was made possible by the overflowing of the Love that existed forever between the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Thus it is that in the words of the great contemporary theologian Karl Adam, "Wherever we turn in the luxuriant springtide, whether to the radiant flowers of the wayside, or the glad song of the birds, or to the bright laughter of human children, everywhere and in all things there greets us the Holy Spirit and His abounding love." But if the world of nature, the world of flower and star and bird shows forth the love of God, what of the great wonder world of the supernatural? God stoops down, becomes a human being, in St. Paul's phrase, "Emptying Himself" that we might live a new life greater than our nature. "He who was rich becomes poor that we might become rich." St. Athanasius put it this way: "The Son of God became the Son of Man that the sons of man might become the sons of God."

The death of Christ on the cross was the greatest single act of love in history and both Bethlehem and Golgotha are only empty images unless we see behind

them the great love of Christ Who so desired us to share in His divinity that He was willing not only to become one of us, but to die as one of us never would. This is love without limit. This is the greatest generosity possible and all this was made possible through the Holy Spirit Who is the personal loving union of the Father and the Son and the source whence comes the superabundance of God's love for man. Writing to the Romans, St. Paul tells them "the Holy Spirit testifies to our spirit that we are the Sons of God" and it is in this abundant life of the spirit, this abundant life of God's grace, that we experience an eternal Pentecost whereby the Holy Spirit actually transforms those redeemed by Christ into living temples of God.

Homesick for God

It is only when we consider the love of God that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can become clear to us. In this temple that is our soul God dwells as someone who is loved. God dwells in our souls and makes our hearts homesick for Him. Like St. Augustine we can agree "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts will never rest until they rest in Thee."

In the soul of man therefore we find that the Holy Spirit is not only someone we know but someone we

should love as well. Between the soul and the God Who dwells there, there should be a deep exchange of friendship. In the words of our Lord at the Last Supper, "I will not now call you servants, but friends." This loving friendship like all true friendship, consists in the giving of self to someone else. It likewise demands a similarity, a common bond between God and the soul. Now Christ told us that unless we would abide in His love, we would not have life in Him, so if we live His life we actually share His nature, and there is this similarity that love demands.

St. John the Beloved disciple wrote to his converts, "Let us therefore love God because God has first loved us." From all eternity God has given us Himself. Long before the world and the universe began to spin in space God knew us and decided to give His life to us. He looked forward through the ages of eternity to that moment when we would be baptized so that He could come and take possession of our souls. There is no yearning, no anxious desire on our part that has not been anticipated a million times by God. Christ told us that the love of God for man is symbolized by the mother hen who wishes to protect her brood and in the greatest prayer ever written He told us we must consider God as our Father Who knoweth we have need of all these things. Thus it is that when the Holy Spirit

dwells in the soul of man He is there as one to be loved because while there He is loving us.

Great Lovers — the Saints

Even in this veil of tears we are united to God by the bond of love. So wonderful is this union that Pope Leo XIII tells us that it is similar to the union of the Beatific vision in heaven. Already we have set our feet on the threshold of heaven and while we will never see God in this life face to face yet the beginning of that union can be experienced in our souls. Of course, it is so easy to forget the Divine Guest in the soul and thus it was that the Sacred Heart could complain to St. Margaret Mary that this Heart which has so loved man was being requited by so much coldness and forgetfulness. Here on earth there are so many distractions, so many competing interests that make us lose sight of the great treasure that we carry about with us all the time. In heaven, of course, it will be vastly different for there in the blessed vision of God there cannot possibly be even the slightest distraction, even the slightest competition for our love. But in this life there are some of us who do know God and love Him and never turn away from Him and these people whose gaze is always turned to the heaven in their souls are saints.

Does the Holy Ghost alone dwell in the soul? We have been speaking, it is true, of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul and it might lead people to suspect that He alone dwelt within us. Such however could not be. St. Paul said that when we are in the state of grace the Spirit of God dwells in us and that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. Very seldom does the New Testament speak of Three Divine Persons as dwelling in the soul. But of course the Holy Spirit could not be separated from the other Two Divine Persons. Christ Who said "Philip, he who sees me sees the Father," would have us realize that neither Father nor Son nor Holy Ghost can ever be separated. Speaking of the assistance given by the Holy Spirit to the soul, our Lord tells His apostles that the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all truth and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I have told you. Obviously this indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul in the state of grace is of course proper to all Three Divine Persons.

All Three Divine Persons

Why is it that we speak of the Holy Ghost as dwelling in our souls? It is for the same reason that we speak of the Father as the creator. When the Creed speaks of God the Father as the creator of heaven and

earth, it does not wish to imply that the Father alone created. As a matter of fact St. Paul speaking of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity made it clear that all things were created to the image of the Son in Whom all things subsist, and as we have seen creation was achieved by the Holy Ghost brooding over the waters and God sent His Spirit and all things were created.

Just as creation is common to the Three Divine Persons but is attributed to the Father for the purpose of devotion that we might honor Him Who is the font and source of all life both human and divine, in the same manner the sanctification of mankind is attributed to the Spirit of all sanctification, God the Holy Ghost. This does not mean, of course, that He alone dwells in our soul or for that matter that He is united personally to the human being as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was joined to the human nature of Christ. All Three Divine Persons equally dwell in a soul. Did not Christ tell us speaking of His Father and Himself, "*We* will come to him"?

It should be, of course, the source of ceaseless wonder for us to realize that within a human soul the Three Divine Persons are present: that Father, Son and Holy Ghost Who have been existing together for all eternity in an intimate union of knowledge and love at this moment express that knowledge and love within

the compass of a human soul. The Father is forever knowing Himself in His Son and this mutual love of Father and Son for each other, is eternally expressing itself in the person of the Holy Spirit. Within our souls the Holy Spirit, the completion of the life of God, comes to us as an expression of God's love for us.

Supernatural Wonderland

The soul of a Christian now becomes even more wondrous. We begin to realize that the purpose of life alone is to become filled with what St. Paul calls the fullness of God. Nothing else matters now save that we become temples of the Holy Spirit. If we are, then nothing can possibly separate us from that God, the possession of Whose life alone makes us happy. Secondly, the enormity of sin is so well experienced when we reflect that only mortal sin can drive the Holy Spirit from our souls. Only a deliberate willfulness on our part to violate a law of God in a serious matter can order the Spirit of Love to leave our souls. We would prefer to be His enemy than to have Him live within us as a friend.

It is especially in the light of this indwelling that we come to realize the other effects of sanctifying grace in our souls. First of all, man is justified, man is ac-

tually made holy and pleasing to God and this, of course, is not achieved in some merely extrinsic way as Martin Luther would have us believe. It is actually accomplished internally by the presence of God in our own soul. As St. Paul put it "Those whom he called, them he justified: and those he justified, them he glorified." Only through this can we understand what St. Peter meant when he told us that the acceptance of promises of Christ would make us partakers of the divine nature. The drop of water is added to the chalice of wine at Mass as a symbol of our union with God that makes us holy. How beautifully the liturgy expresses this in the Mass:

O God, Who has established the nature of man in wondrous dignity and even more wondrously has renewed it, grant that through the mystery of this water and wine, we may be made partakers of His divinity, Who deigned to become partakers of our humanity, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the union of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end.

St. Augustine, the great Doctor of the Church, could even use the expression "deified" not in the sense that we become gods but that God gives us His nature

and in some marvelous manner we share in it. The original temptation of Adam and Eve was the desire to achieve divinity, in the words of the devil "to be like God." How strange it is that now mankind can achieve a share in divinity and not through disobedience but through the free gift of God.

Real Sons of God

The second effect of grace which is more clearly understood through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is that we become sons of God. Any son, of course, is someone who has a common nature with his father from whom he received that nature. Consequently a table that a carpenter constructs is not called his child. Likewise man is not naturally speaking a child of God because his nature is finite and differs essentially from the infinite God. But once man becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, once his soul is filled with sanctifying grace then there is a similarity of nature. We are born not of the will of the flesh but of God and since we have received Christ He has given us power to become the Sons of God. In St. Paul's words if we are sons then we are heirs of God. Heaven is truly our native land and this life merely a pilgrimage point. The great English Cardinal Wiseman grasped this reality that

heaven alone is our true home when on his deathbed he told his friends that he had no regrets and that he felt like a schoolboy going home for the holidays.

Another great effect of this indwelling of God is, of course, guidance in our own spiritual life. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of wisdom and from His inspiration comes those noble ideas and thoughts that a Christian follows if he is going to live a holy life. Thus it is in every Catholic school, in every seminary classroom each lecture and study period is begun with a petition to God the Holy Ghost to enlighten us, to show us the way. Not only does He fill our hearts and enkindle in them the fire of His divine love but through the gift of wisdom He enables us to see God in everything, and everything in the light of God's love. One who grasped the significance of the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our souls was Father Isaac Thomas Hecker, the founder of the Paulists, when he applied it to practical life. Briefly, his teaching is this. The Holy Spirit dwells in the souls of the just and His presence is not inert or static but dynamic and co-operative and His work takes on a twofold aspect. The Holy Spirit anxious for the soul's holiness suggests to the soul its future course of action by inspiration and illuminations of the mind.

The Holy Ghost will habitually suggest to the faithful what they shall do or abstain from doing. This is the ultimate in Christianity, to bring all its disciplines under the immediate and complete guidance of the Holy Spirit; which is only saying that the aim of Christianity is to sanctify all souls. For sanctity consists in being habitually and completely under the guidance of the dictates, suggestions and inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

If we reconcile ourselves to His good inspiration, we will know the way He wishes us to follow. Though faith be walking in the darkness toward a home that we cannot see, yet the unerring voice of Him Who is within us will see that our feet do not go astray. We must therefore be prepared to always follow His will. Our Blessed Lord left no doubt about it: "He who puts his hand to the plow and looks backward is not fit for the kingdom of heaven." Unlike Lot's wife we should not look backward but constantly and with full confidence follow the dictates of Him Who is our God.

Does God Need Us?

There is one aspect of God's nature that must never be forgotten in considering His presence within us. If

we did so, it would make this doctrine of the Indwelling harmful and untrue. Cardinal Newman in one of his sermons warns us against considering God as a superior type of human being. He urges us not to carry on our relations with God as though He were a landlord—a creditor, someone only little better than we. Closer than anyone else of course He is, and yet the God Who is dwelling within us is never human being but is the almighty creator of the universe. This same God that we can speak to so simply, Who never keeps us waiting even for an instant when we desire an audience with Him, is nevertheless the God Who has fashioned stars hundreds of millions of miles in diameter. He is the same God Who dwells for all eternity in a self-sufficient union of Three Divine Persons and Who needs not man for His happiness.

Just because God dwells within us we must not imagine that He needs us. We are apt to think that if God is necessary for us perhaps we are necessary for Him. This fifty-fifty proposition is a type of modern idolatry that has replaced the inept golden calf of the pilgrim Hebrews, but it is idolatry just the same. This truth should be written in stars so brilliant that man would never forget it. God needs man not at all for He is perfect and has perfect happiness in Himself and while man on earth should strive under pain of ever

remaining an everlasting inadequate, incomplete being to know and love God here that we may know and love Him hereafter, he should never strive after virtue with the motive that this little action of his may help God. "Without our recognition," says St. Gregory of Nyssa, "His Majesty would not go unwitnessed, His Goodness would not go unenjoyed." Add to God's extrinsic glory, we may, but assist God or make Him one mite happier, never!

Against this assumption that God is man writ large, we counter with the view that God is eternal, and man never existed until vast ages were run. No matter though man may take comfort in that his hydrogen bomb is more perfect than a neighboring nation's, though he may be delighted at his contribution to culture and civilization, yet he must for all of that get down on his knees and plead his nothingness before God. Man is incomplete in himself and his heart will never rest until it rests in Him. How incredibly strange it is, that the same eternal God desires to share our life—to take up residence in our souls that we might thereby know and love Him more! The great Cardinal Newman was as truly amazed as anyone when he contemplated God's presence within us. He saw clearly that "the world was created as a dwelling place for man's body; that man's body was made as a dwelling

place for man's soul; and that his soul was created as a dwelling place for God!"

Streamlined Sanctity

In the long history of the Church there have always been writers who have sought for short cuts to sanctity. Have there not been saints and ecclesiastical writers who have found in this or that virtue the quickest way to holiness? And yet what can be more direct than the application of the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost to our own souls? We are thereby never alone. No matter where we are, or what we are attempting (provided of course that we are in the state of grace), God shares it with us. The office, the classroom, the marketplace, the theater—wherever our duty leads us, God accompanies us. It requires no preparation to pray to God within us. We need no church or spiritual book to keep our mind aware of God since He is within us. St. Alphonsus was always reminded of the presence of his divine Guest by the striking of a clock, and he never lost the realization of God. In St. Augustine's words "cannot we do what all these (the saints) have done?"

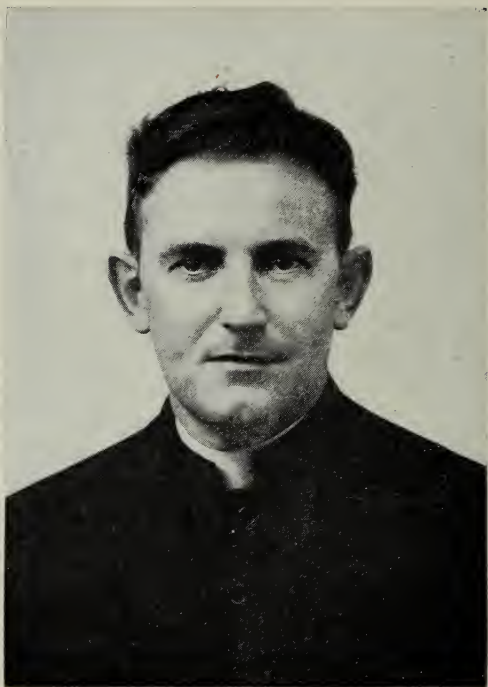
Since the purpose of our life is to adore the Blessed Trinity for all eternity, how wonderful for us to begin our vocation at the present time. It's quite true that

we will not be able to see God face to face in this side of heaven. For this reason we shall not be able to portray for ourselves what is in store for us, on the first moment of eternity. But this we know. Our hearts will never be at ease until we come to the contemplation of the Blessed Trinity. As we go through life we find that family life and friendship leave something to be desired; that inspiration which comes from sunsets and symphonies is passing, even while it is enjoyed. And we know that there are few days after childhood when we are really perfectly happy. All these things tell us to become intimately united with the Blessed Trinity in our own souls. For though we are unlike God and separated from Him by an infinite chasm, yet He is paradoxically closer to us than any other being. His Love bridges the gap between us and tells us "Rise, clasp my hand and come!" The praise and love that we give to the Triune God in our souls will not dissipate with the distractions of a carefree life but shall blend into the "Holy, Holy, Holy" that we shall offer to God forever in heaven.

The best way of making sure that we are part of the heavenly choir which will be thrilled for all eternity with the Vision of Father, Son and Holy Ghost is to follow their inspirations here below. Cardinal Manning put it about as well as anyone when he com-

posed a prayer to the Holy Spirit that every Christian should say frequently, and in this way we will make sure that our feet will not slip on the road to eternity.

O Holy Spirit of God, take me as Thy disciple: guide me, illuminate me, sanctify me. Bind my hands that they may do no evil. Cover my eyes that they may see it no more. Sanctify my heart that evil may not dwell within me. Be Thou my God, be Thou my Guide. Whithersoever Thou leadest me, I will follow. Whatsoever Thou forbiddest me, I will renounce; and whatsoever Thou commandest me, in Thy strength I will do. Lead me then, O God to the fullness of Thy truth. Amen.



MEET THE AUTHOR

Father Richard Walsh, alumnus of Fordham and Catholic University, was ordained in 1944. The following year he received the M.A. degree in American Church history. From 1946 until 1951 he was at the University of California in Berkeley where he worked among the students as Newman Club Chaplain. Since that time he has been engaged as a missionary, first in Detroit, and currently as a member of the New York Mission Band of the Paulist Fathers.